

GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

A publication of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, Concord, NH (603) 271-3710

November, 2011

A Recipe for a Thanksgiving Disaster

Who would think that the recipes you choose for Thanksgiving could cause a problem, other than the heart burn you get from Aunt Martha's green bean casserole. But fat from meat, sauces, baking goods, cooking oil, lard, margarine, shortening and butter can all be potential recipes for disaster-- a huge sewer problem.

It begins when these messy, greasy residues are washed down the kitchen sink. As the water cools, these fatty, greasy and oily (FOG) foods solidify in the pipes. Over time they stick and coat the sewer lines that are designed to whisk away the unwanted liquids. As the FOGs build up, they can restrict and even stop the flow of water. The resulting back-up of messy liquid could cause a serious disaster. The back-up can damage property, ruin items and cancel holiday plans.

These FOG problems can block the sewer pipes in your house, in the street (if you are on a city sewer system) or in your private septic system. Once clogged most folks will have to hire a plumber to clean the pipes, an expense most of us would prefer to avoid. The good news is you can help avoid creating the problem in the first place. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services encourages people to protect their plumbing, as well as their sewer or septic system by properly disposing of FOG. Here are some simple tips:

- Never pour oil or grease into a drain or toilet.
- Scrape grease and food waste from plates, pots, pans, grills and kitchen utensils and put it into a trash can.
- Small amounts of cooking oil, such as meat drippings, can be soaked up with a paper towel and thrown into the trash.
- Put baskets and strainers in sinks to catch food scraps.
- Don't put grease or meats in garbage disposals.
- Let grease solidify in a container (preferably a sturdy closed-lid container, like a coffee can) before putting it into the trash.
- Mix larger amounts of cooking oil with an absorbent material like sawdust or kitty litter before putting in the garbage. Dispose of large amounts by dividing it over several collection days.
- Check to see if your community has a waste vegetable oil collection program.

By being aware of the damage that FOG can do to your home's plumbing and septic system, and armed with these simple tips, you can rest a little easier this holiday season, knowing that your Currier & Ives picture-perfect holiday won't be ruined by a plumbing disaster.

For more environmental tips, visit the N.H. Department of Environmental Services website at www.des.nh.gov or call (603) 271-3503. For more information on FOG management, please contact Ray Gordon with the DES Wastewater Engineering Bureau at ray.gordon@des.nh.gov.

#